




MEETING DATE: 6/2/08
ITEM NO: 20
DESK ITEM

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: June 2, 2008
TO: MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: GREG LARSON, TOWN MANAGER 
SUBJECT: CONSIDER STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING
COMMUNITY AND YOUTH SPORTS FACILITIES AND DISPOSITION OF TOWN
LAND WITHIN VASONA PARK

DISCUSSION:

Attached are three additional e-mails that were received regarding this item.

Attachments:

1. 6/2/08 e-mail from Peggy Dallas
2. 6/2/08 e-mail from Khoa Vo
3. 6/2/08 e-mail from Christine Currie



PREPARED BY: **PAMELA JACOBS**
Assistant Town Manager

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Reviewed by: _____ Assistant Town Manager _____ Town Attorney
_____ Clerk Administrator _____ Finance _____ Community Development

Patsy Garcia - Town Land within Vasona Park

From: "Peggy Dallas" <pdallas@infospect.com>
To: <manager@losgatosca.gov>
Date: 6/2/2008 6:47 AM
Subject: Town Land within Vasona Park
CC: <bspector@losgatosca.gov>, <mwasserman@losgatosca.gov>, <sglickman@losgatosca.gov>, <dmcnutt@losgatosca.gov>, <jpirzynski@losgatosca.gov>

Dear Town Manager and Town Council,

This letter is in response to the Town staff report regarding the "...Disposition of Town Land within Vasona Park", dated May 23, 2008. I am concerned that the Town is rushing into an irreversible sale that will have long term consequences.

The staff report recommends selling the land for \$6 million and putting that money in reserve for a community sports complex. Let's go shopping for land:

- * There is the Swanson Ford property (4.6 acres) which just sold for approximately \$4 million an acre.
- * The property just north of the JCC on Oka Road where there are several parcels (totaling 18+ acres) some of which are zoned commercial. This area has possibilities but still the price would be prohibitive and most people would have to drive to get there.
- * And there is the property referred to as the North 40, the area enclosed by Lark, Los Gatos Boulevard, Hwy 17 and Hwy 85 selling for around \$3.5 million per acre. There is speculation about a hotel on this land. The best case scenario here would involve the hotel developers selling the town some of the land for \$1 million per acre for a sports complex to create "community benefit." At this location, most everyone would have to drive to get there, which would increase the already busy traffic there. The widening of Los Gatos Boulevard will ease but not decrease traffic volume. The sports complex would be located amidst heavy traffic fumes from all sides.

Are there any other properties in Town potentially available? What would the cost be to the Town?

The staff report places a value on the Vasona parcel based on residential development (so-called "best use") and on "comparable" appraisal methods. Neither makes sense here. If we sell this parcel, we will need to buy another piece of land for the sports complex, so the only measure that works is replacement cost. It doesn't take long to realize that the land adjacent to Oak Meadow is irreplaceable, priceless.

Instead of selling, the town could hold on to its land hoping for a trade with the county. If the trade never happens, we could begin to use our parcel, starting in 2010, for volleyball pits, a dog park, a basketball court, and so on. Two soccer fields could be set up on the lawn in Oak Meadow Park which would still leave the large grassy area available for Frisbee, etc. when soccer wasn't being played. We would have a centrally located sports complex

ATTACHMENT 1

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and it could happen in the foreseeable future.

The recent staff report discusses three alternatives to selling and describes why each doesn't work. Let's review them:

1. Force the County to Provide Active Recreational Space within Vasona Park

The County has been steadfast in opposing any change to their traditional role of providing passive recreational space, leaving the provision of active recreational space and sports facilities to local municipalities, as is usually the case. This policy position has existed for decades and extends from Parks staff through executive management to the Board of Supervisors.

The county's policy doesn't affect Los Gatos park lands. The county's policy would remain intact for their property. In 2010, we regain use of our property and can use it as an extension of Oak Meadow Park. Is a volleyball pit less passive than Vasona Vibrations?...the Norouz Festival?...Fantasy of Lights?

The argument that the Town could force a change upon the County by restricting public use of Town park land within Vasona Park upon expiration of the current lease is not a viable option for two reasons:

The town doesn't have to restrict public use but the power to be able to do so is what is important. Owning this parcel gives Los Gatos the power to have a say about what happens in Vasona Park; don't under estimate this.

The Town does not have any effective access to its land except through and with the permission of the County;

The Town has an eighteen foot wide adjacency with Oak Meadow Park by the Train Station.

- 1. The public impact from and opposition to any closure or degradation of the Town's park land within Vasona would likely be severe.*

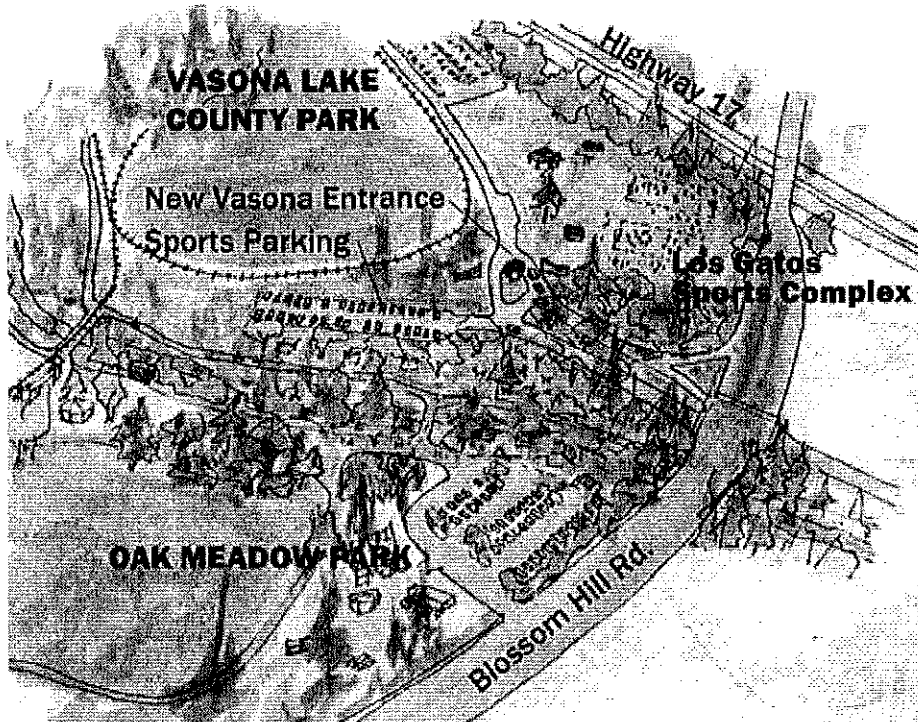
The county is playing hardball and you are running scared, afraid to stand up for what is really ours.

2. Town to Use Its Land Within Vasona Park for Active Recreational Uses

The Town's 13 acres within the middle of Vasona Park are unsuitable for active recreational use as they primarily consist of a creek, oak knoll, trails, road, parking, a picnic area and a portion of a tot lot. The existing small grassy area is insufficient for any sports field use. Significant development to increase the grassy area for fields would require eliminating existing services (e.g., Billy Jones Railroad and tot lot) and significant environmental impacts to the existing creek and trees.

The public could play volleyball or have a dog park on the existing parcel, but a better solution would be a land swap. The county gets the 13-acre parcel with their improvements already on it, and Los Gatos gets a sports facility along Blossom Hill Rd. If a trade was made, would the public mind driving in from Blossom Hill Rd. an extra 100 yards, past grassy playing fields looking pretty much the way it does now, to get to the new Vasona

main gate?



Possible Los Gatos Sports Complex adjacent to Oak Meadow Park on land acquired in possible trade with the County.

Further, maintenance of the Town's 13 acres would require additional staff and resources that are not currently budgeted or a proportional reduction in the maintenance of other parks and medians throughout the Town.

A new sports complex will require additional town resources, but the community need is clear.

Last, it is unlikely that the County would provide the access needed to use or maintain any active recreational facilities in the middle of Vasona Park.

We will have access to our parcel through Oak Meadow Park. The county, on the other hand, will have no way to reach most of Vasona Park from Blossom Hill Rd., since our parcel interrupts the only existing road. Also, it would be detrimental to the County's lucrative picnic space rental business not to allow us access to do the proper maintenance.

3. Delay

The County's offer to provide \$6 million to the Town while maintaining the Town's land as park and open space has been withdrawn once before and has only been offered again for a limited time. Delaying acceptance of the County's offer could lead to a significant reduction in the valuation of the Town's land due to either declining real estate market conditions or future appraisals based on existing, rather than residential, zoning. Any delay also delays the availability of the funds needed to create a community and

youth sports facility.

Although it is unusual for the county to open its purse strings and offer such a large sum of cash, the \$6 million doesn't begin to compare to the replacement cost value of the land to the town. The value of this land will not depreciate significantly in the next two years. And, if the County doesn't have the money then, they may be more willing to discuss a trade. It will take more than two years to raise the additional \$20+ million dollars the Town will need to buy land in Los Gatos for a Sports Complex.

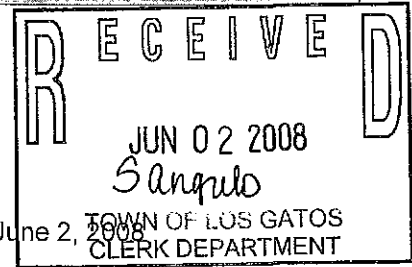
The conclusion of the recent staff report is a reiteration of the recommendations. The six points listed offer nothing new except to sell the land at Vasona:

1. Master plans for existing baseball and tennis facilities. **This doesn't create any new usage.**
2. Allow soccer practice at Oak Meadow. **Has already been done.**
3. Sell the Vasona parcel for \$6 million
4. Pass an ordinance that reserves the money from the county to only be spent on sports. **It's the land, not the money, which needs to be reserved.**
5. Speed up General Plan and public discussion of sports needs. **We've been asking for more sports facilities for nearly 10 years, since the last General Plan was written. It is not the lack of money or planning, but the lack of land that is the problem.**
6. Create a committee to find land for sports facilities. **Where? Shouldn't we have at least a couple of good answers to this question before we even consider selling the land?**

Thank you for your consideration,

Peggy and Alastair Dallas
17681 Foster Road
Los Gatos

From: Khoa Vo <kvoman@yahoo.com>
To: <clerk@losgatosca.gov>
Date: 6/2/2008 12:01 PM
Subject: Public Comment On Agenda Item #20 - Town of Los Gatos, Monday, June 2, 2008
Agenda



Dear Honorable Mayor Spector and Council Members,

As Vice Chair of the County of Santa Clara, Parks and Recreation Commission, I'm writing in support of the Town's staff recommendations on Item #20 of the June 2, 2008 Agenda, authorizing the Town Manager to negotiate and execute a trade and sale of 13 acres of unusable Town land within Vasona Lake County Park for \$6 million to the County of Santa Clara.

I believe this is a win-win proposition for both the Town of Los Gatos and for the County of Santa Clara. The Town will realize \$6 million of unanticipated revenue from the sale of this unusable 13-acres land within Vasona Lake County Park and will be in a better position financially to design and construct a future community and youth sports facility. There will be no impacts to the Town's services by approving the sale and trade of this land. The County will be able to secure the land for open space and parks usage in perpetuity.

The new offer (\$6 million) is considerably more generous than the original (\$2 million) and I urge the Council to consider and accept the offer. It is a generous offer because the new offer is based on the residential appraisal method instead of an open space usage appraisal method. The residential appraisal method is extremely advantageous to the Town's position because the 13-acres of land within Vasona Lake County Park could never be used for residential purposes but can only be used for open space and parks due to access, wildlife presence, existing land use, and topography.

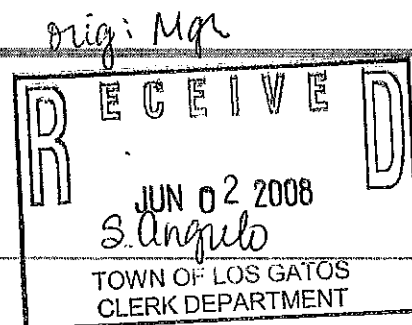
Therefore, I urge the Mayor and Council to review and support staff's recommendations and move to approve the recommendations in order to move forward with the process.

Sincerely,

Khoa Vo, Vice Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission
Santa Clara County

Town Clerk (External) - Vasona desk item

From: Christine Currie <christine@onourboat.com>
To: <clerk@losgatosca.gov>
Date: 6/2/2008 2:22 PM
Subject: Vasona desk item



June 2, 2008

Dear Mayor Spector, and Council Members,

I can not attend this evening, due to the lateness of this agenda item this evening, and young children who go to bed early. I am sorry to deliver this to you as a desk item.

This seems like a big wish list: volleyball courts, dog park, and soccer fields.

Yes, we do indeed need them. As a local mom with two elementary age children, I agree the community needs a sports complex. Is this the correct approach?

This wish list is something only the Planning Commission and a thorough General Plan analysis can flesh out BEFORE anything is to be decided and before a transaction can occur. Very little discussion concerning our own Planning Commission and the role they play before anything gets decided upon. A quick consult of the General Plan may be in order for both sides of the equation.

Perhaps a large bank account earmarked specifically for sports and drawing close to \$300,000 a year in interest IS a step in the right direction. My family is in favor of the Vasona passive use park rules remaining in effect for the entire community to enjoy.

The proposed \$6 M would be a nice springboard for a sports complex when the right location is found.

We have seen or heard very little discussion concerning the riparian area aside the tributary that runs next to the proposed sports complex area.

The constraints of the site, like a large area that would need to be leveled; and many mature trees to be removed have never been addressed to shoe-horn a dream into a small space.

Again, The General Plan is very clear on this issue. The California Department of Fish and Game would ultimately have a say as well.

Thank-you
 Christine & Rob Currie
 117 Broadway

ATTACHMENT 3

